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## **Community Involvement Plan Completed**

DNR and EPA have completed a plan that outlines how the agencies will keep Ashland area residents involved and informed as the investigation and cleanup move forward at the Ashland NSP/Lakefront site. The plan, called a community involvement plan, will guide the agencies – primarily Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources with support from Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services -- in providing the kinds of public involvement opportunities that community members have said are important to them.

The plan is based on more than 40 one-on-one and small group meetings between federal and state agencies and area residents, civic and environmental organizations, businesses, local officials, and other community leaders. During the meetings, community members shared their concerns, questions and knowledge of both the site and the investigation and cleanup process. In addition, they provided valuable ideas and feedback about various communication options such as public meetings, newspaper coverage, mailers, web sites, etc.

The agencies invite members of the public to become familiar with the plan. It is available for public review at several area libraries and agency web sites (see the information box).

## **What We Learned**

Community members participating in the meetings provided valuable information about their understanding of the site, investigation and cleanup process and health risks. The agencies will use the knowledge gained to develop fact sheets, meet presentations and other communication pieces that address the questions and concerns raised. Here's a summary of what we learned:

- Many residents admitted that their understanding of the site contamination and cleanup process is low to medium. Most people said they knew where the contamination is in the bay, but didn't really understand the options for cleanup or how the cleanup process works under the Superfund law.
- The cleanup process is confusing to many, particularly now that Xcel Energy is doing the investigation work and EPA is the lead agency overseeing it.
- Some questioned the need for more samples and analysis, wanting to move forward with cleanup right away.
- Confusion about which agency is doing what, and the current and potential roles of Xcel, the city of Ashland, nearby tribes, local civic and environmental organizations and the general public.
- Limited understanding of the actual risks posed by eating fish caught near the site, boating, swimming at the beach, drinking water from the artesian wells, gardening or digging for worms on properties adjacent to the former manufactured gas plant.

EPA and DNR will address these and other questions and concerns in the months to come.

## **Your Preferences for Communication**

Residents offered numerous opinions about the best way for the agencies to communicate information and involve the public at key decision points. Here's a summary:

- The Ashland *Daily Press* was cited as the main source of general information for site news. Residents also read the Bayfield *County Journal*, *Red Cliff News*, and Bad River's *News from the Sloughs*. For technical information, they preferred to go to a web site or look at site documents in the library.
- Many felt that community meetings are useful. Residents particularly wanted meetings before significant actions (such as the decision on a cleanup plan), so that they could ask questions and express opinions for consideration. Some preferred that meetings be held at Our Lady of the Lake church due to its location near the site; others preferred Wisconsin Technical College because of the availability of modern audio-visual equipment.
- Fact sheets and other handouts are useful when written in non-scientific language whenever possible, and include illustrations when complex technical information needs to be communicated. Fact sheets should be distributed around town in public places such as local businesses and government offices.
- Communication with local civic, environmental and recreational groups is key. Group members indicated a willingness to disseminate information through their organizational newsletters and e-mail distribution lists.
- Web pages, e-mail distribution lists and other forms of electronic communication was of interest to many. Others indicated that many do not have easy access to computers and want information available in the Ashland and tribal libraries.
- Other suggestions for communication included participating in school and church meetings and events, developing portable table-top displays, and improving the warning signs posted at the site.

## **The Community Involvement Plan**

The agencies invite you to take a look at the community involvement plan, available at local libraries and on agency web sites (see information box). It provides greater detail on the questions and concerns raised, and community involvement and outreach techniques the agencies plan to use in the future. Appendices to the plan provide fact sheets on Superfund, site history, community background, and local and agency contacts. Your comments on the plan and/or thoughts on ways to better involve the public are always welcome.

## **For More Information**

The community involvement plan is available for public review at the following libraries:

Vaughn Public Library  
502 W. Main St.  
Ashland  
For hours call: 715-682-7060

Bad River Public Tribal Library  
100 Maple St.

Odanah

For hours call: 715-682-7111 ext. 1532

Red Cliff Public Library

88385 Pike Rd., Hwy 13

Bayfield

For hours call: 715-779-3700

Or, visit:

<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/rr/cleanup/Ashland/html> or [epa.gov/region5/sites/Ashland](http://epa.gov/region5/sites/Ashland)

Or, call:

Jamie Dunn

Project Manager, DNR

715-635-4049

[dunnj@dnr.state.wi.us](mailto:dunnj@dnr.state.wi.us)

Bri Bill

Community Involvement Coordinator, EPA

312-353-6646 or 800-621-8431

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**About the Ashland/NSP Lakefront Site . . .**

The Ashland/NSP Lakefront site comprises several properties on the shore of Chequamegon Bay, including property owned by Xcel Energy (formerly Northern States Power Company), the Wisconsin Central Limited railroad corridor, and the city-owned Kreher Park and former wastewater treatment plant. The site also includes approximately 10 acres of Chequamegon Bay sediment (mud).

Soil, ground water, sediment and bay water is contaminated with waste typical of manufactured gas plants including tars, oils and other waste products. A manufactured gas plant operated from the 1880s to 1947 on the site now owned by Xcel Energy. Other historic industrial operations may have contributed to the contamination.